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Photos: Marcin Kin, Marian Chyka, Gustavo Epifanio



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## AMA-SX

### Back on line...

Ryan Dungey is too experienced not to acknowledge the fickle nature of the sport but his form and rhythm hit a typical peak at Anaheim II for his first victory of 2017. With Roczen out of play the invitation is now extended to Webb, Tomac, Anderson and co to catch the KTM

Photo by Rich Shepherd















## **From Australia to the UK...**

KTM may have squeezed their grip on the Dakar Rally a little tighter but ownership of glory swung from one side of the world to the other with Sam Sunderland coming good on his virtual rookie promise to become the first Briton to win in thirty-nine editions of the epic race. Aside from the demands and drains photos like this sum up the scale and beauty of the Dakar

Photo by Marcin Kin/KTM Images



**DAKAR**





**MOTOGP**

## The new Programme...

The 'Tron' styling certainly gave the 2017 Movistar Yamaha presentation a different vibe and while Valentino Rossi continues his Peter Pan impression of seeming to defy the effects of time there was considerable interest in watching Maverick Viñales shine in official team colours in Madrid. Could it be a presentation – and changing – of the guard?

Photo by Milagro/yamahamotogp.com











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OVER TO YOU



# AMA-SX

## LOS ANGELES, ANAHEIM

ANGEL STADIUM · JANUARY 21st

450SX winner: Ryan Dungey, KTM

250SX West Coast winner: Justin Hill, Kawasaki



KEN ROCZEN'S KO FROM 2017 SUPERCROSS TOOK JUST AS MANY HEADLINES AS RYAN DUNGEY'S FIRST VICTORY OF THE SEASON. THE KTM HAD ALREADY BEEN SETTING THE PACE ON A RUTTY AND SOFT TRACK, FLUFFED IN SECTIONS BY CALIFORNIAN RAIN, BEFORE ROCZEN'S CHARGE BACK TO PODIUM RECKONING WAS SPECTACULARLY HALTED. HRC STILL MADE THE BOX WITH COLE SEELY STEPPING INTO THE VOID AND MARVIN MUSQUIN WAS THE SECOND PILLAR OF CONSISTENCY FOR KTM. ANDREA WILSON GIVES HER VIEW FROM A2 WHILE STEVE MATTHES WEIGHS IN WITH SOME PERSPECTIVE BEHIND-THE-SCENES AT ANAHEIM



SUPERCROSS: ANAHEIM 2



By Steve Matthes/Andrea Wilson  
Photos by Simon Cudby/Rich Shepherd

# DUNGEY PICKS UP THE PIECES



In motorsports there's that fine line between greatness and heartbreak. In both Supercross and Motocross that line appears to be razor sharp, illustrated at Anaheim II when one of Monster Energy AMA Supercross' stars – Ken Roczen – was launched off his bike from a kicker into a triple and sent sailing in the air like a lawn dart.

The following day Roczen posted a grim picture on Instagram of a left arm compound fracture and joint dislocation with no indication of his return to action but it's safe to say his Supercross season was ended Saturday night.

It's easy to be the armchair quarterback and say that Roczen should have backed it down a notch and accepted a podium position and the points. He had a good position in the championship, kicking the season off with two very impressive wins and had worked his way into podium reckoning at Anaheim. But in the heat of the battle – especially a battle as heated as a highly competitive championship like Supercross – it's not always easy to judge that fine line between heroics and the discretion to keep it on two wheels.

Perhaps no one's a better judge of that than Red Bull KTM's Ryan Dungey. Normally so rock solid...But even he gets bitten, such as last year's tumble at Thunder Valley, just the third round of AMA Motocross season and the back injury that ruled him out of the summer series.

"That's a tough one to answer," Dungey admitted. "I think to where I was at with outdoors -you're trying your best, you're giving it your all, you make a mistake and sometimes it costs you. But then again you can't ride scared out there, either. You've got to enjoy it a little bit.

"The pace is only getting faster. The riders are only getting better. The equipment...I try to do the best I can. But then in the scheme of things, like I was at Lakewood, Colorado, you're going for it and you just make a mistake. You're going that fast. Sometimes you save it and sometimes you don't, but you hope and pray for health and safety for all the riders. It's a tough question."

Roczen's teammate Cole Seely also pointed to Dungey as the guy to illustrate the point that it's not as cut-and-dry as it seems from the sidelines to make that judgement call.

"I think Ryan's really the most qualified to touch on that question," Seely said. "He's the most consistent and even he struggles with that. So it's tough. You can walk the track right now and it's absolutely amazing that our bikes can make it through that kind of stuff. It's a gamble for sure. Even the last two laps for me out there, I kind of backed it down and rode it in just because it was hectic. It's part of the sport though."

Although it is part of the sport no one likes to see someone get hurt, even if it's a championship rival.

"You hate to see stuff like that happen tonight," Dungey said. "I don't sit here like, wow...[I won] I'm more I hope he's okay. I don't wish that upon anybody. We need a guy like that. So it's unfortunate at times, but let's hope he's okay too."



SUPERCROSS ANAHEIM 2







Not an easy time for Eli Tomac with plenty of questions being asked and the anxiety to make a podium and catch a break for the first time in 2017 becoming all the more pressing. Jason Anderson meanwhile (right) entered a fresh spate of controversy at A2 and tested the flexibility of the AMA rules for rider 'interaction'











## SUPERCROSS: ANAHEIM 2

A first win for Justin Hill and some tasty winners' pizza logged for Mitch Payton's Pro Circuit crew. The leap from KTM to Kawasaki now looks to be paying off and the efforts of '46' are also allowing the improving Austin Forkner to gain crucial 250SX mileage





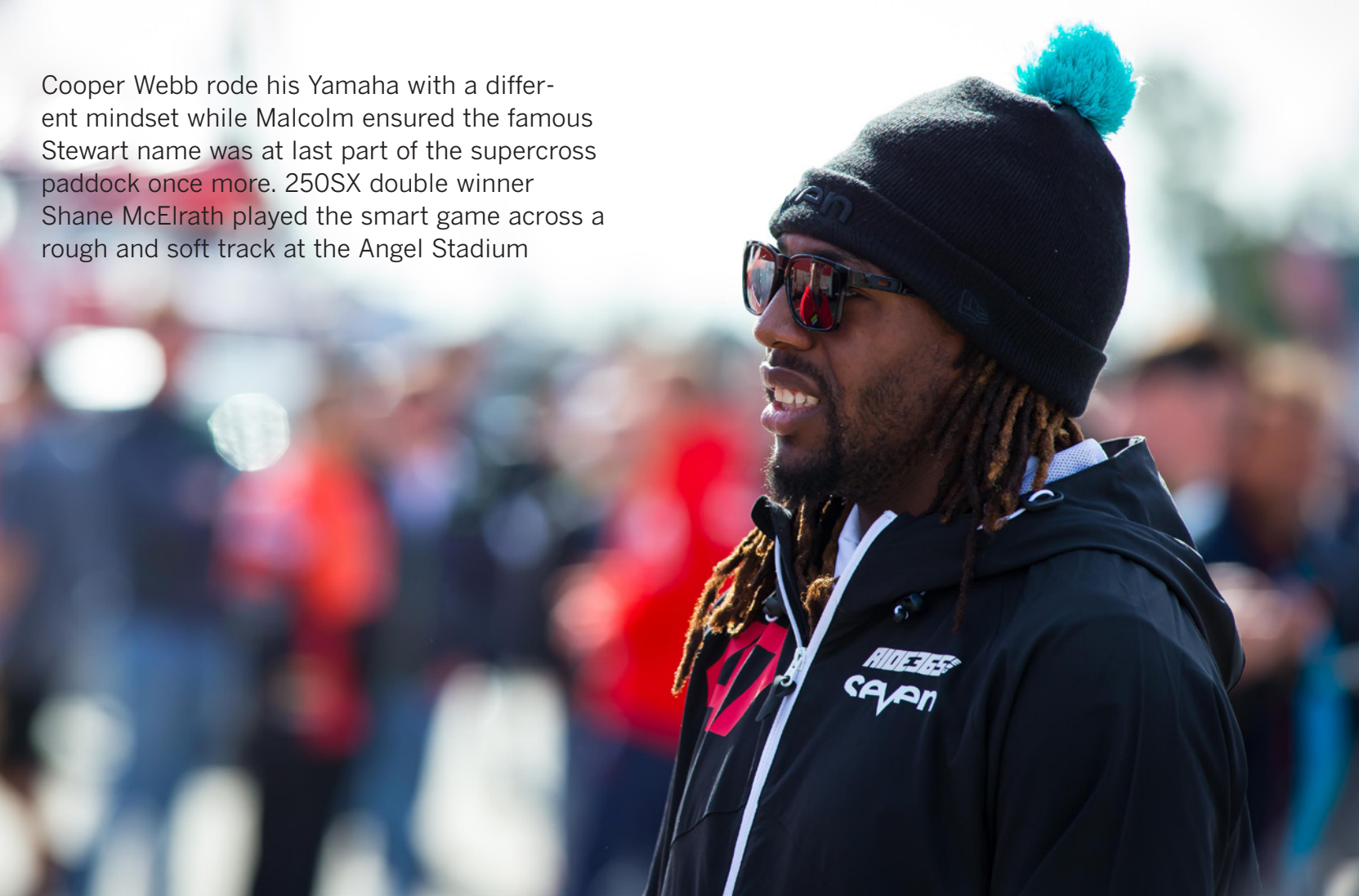






## SUPERCROSS: ANAHEIM 2

Cooper Webb rode his Yamaha with a different mindset while Malcolm ensured the famous Stewart name was at last part of the supercross paddock once more. 250SX double winner Shane McElrath played the smart game across a rough and soft track at the Angel Stadium





Marvin Musquin is in a sound position to keep pace with his title-holding teammate but also strike when the moment arises. It must be only a matter of days and weeks before the Frenchman scales the peak of that 450SX box





SUPERCROSS: ANAHEIM 2





## PEEK BEHIND THE CURTAIN...

By Steve Matthes

**T**hree rounds down in the Monster Energy Supercross series, an FIM World Championship, and as much as we were hyped to start the series, the familiarity of the dangers of the sport of supercross hit us smack in the head like Honda's Ken Roczen hit the ground.

Certainly the remaining 14 rounds do not seem as enticing to anyone outside of Red Bull KTM with the German rider getting bucked over a big triple about nine laps into the main and hitting the ground hard in a crash that was eerily similar to his Monster Energy Cup crash only this time he didn't bounce right up. A compound fracture of the arm and a dislocated elbow was the damage and with that, the wind was knocked right out of the series after Roczen opened with two straight wins.

It's early but Roczen and the defending champion on the Red Bull KTM, Ryan Dungey, had proved to be the class of the field in the 450SX class. Something that not many of us thought would be possible this early on in the year. It usually takes five to seven races before the riders accept the inevitability that they're not going to win!

Let's take a look at a little more behind the scenes of Anaheim 2:

-The big news was race-winning threat Jason Anderson of the Rockstar Husqvarna team was disqualified for slapping or punching (depending on who you talk to) MCR's Vince Friese for actions in the heat race. Friese has a reputation

for aggressive, some say dirty, riding (hey, that's just like Anderson!) and he dove to the inside in a turn and knocked Anderson down when he cut under KTM's Marvin Musquin, who also fell. Anderson was not happy and although his blows were harmless, the FIM has dictated that any contact between riders is an automatic DQ. To this reporter, the move Friese made wasn't anything besides a dumb decision that wasn't going to help him make passes. If it was any other rider, maybe some words are exchanged but that's about it. Because it was Friese, the anger level rose and punches/slaps were thrown. Anderson's got to be smarter than that, he's on another level than Friese and shouldn't be bothered. And for the record the FIM reviewed Friese's move and determined that no action was needed.

-We had been wondering about two 450SX riders through two races and what had been going on with them. Monster Yamaha's Cooper Webb and Monster Kawasaki's Eli Tomac hadn't been riding as well as themselves or their teams had wished and there's been some questions being asked behind the scenes about each. Well, at A2 Cooper Webb qualified great, made it to the main out of his heat and then holeshot the main event. He eventually finished fourth and looked like he might repeat his fade back from San Diego but kudos to him, he pulled it back together and held off JGR Suzuki's Weston Peick. A huge improvement for Webb from the first two weeks and we knew he was too good to be this bad for long.





But Tomac, man, it's still not good. He didn't get a great start but early on was moving up fast and he caught and passed Chad Reed but with Roczen down and the riders forced to roll an entire section, he seemed to lose his steam a bit. Reed eventually found his way back by Tomac (in the same spot the #3 got him) and then yarded the Kawasaki rider. Behind the scenes the guys at Kawasaki are a bit stumped as Tomac is seemingly taking the blame on his shoulders for this slump. The one rider that we all thought would benefit from these longer timed mains seems to be the one that's most hurt by it (which is a really strange thing to type).

-As far as Reed, well he's grumpy. DNF-9-7 through three races makes the Aussie not a happy camper. I have a good relationship with the 22 from years of working at Yamaha back in the day and he's declined my requests for interviews for three weeks! He said "I have nothing good to say"! As I've been saying, Reed's not fast enough anymore to rip through the pack but if he gets a start, he can figure things out and run with the top guys. He just hasn't gotten it yet.

-Malcolm Stewart made his season debut on the RIDE365.com Seven Suzuki team based around, well, himself. He was included in the opening ceremonies which a few riders grumbled about but his ride in the heat race was great. The main was going ok until he crashed/got tired and he struggled to finish. It'll get better from here for the 250SX champion and it seemed the fans

enjoyed seeing him there as much as anyone. By the way, we expect to see brother James at the races at some point and some "people" that would know tell me it'll be on a Honda whenever he does come up.

- As far as the 250SX class is concerned, Pro Circuit's Justin Hill won his first race of the season in a dominating fashion and he's really caught fire after an opener that left some on his team a bit mystified. Hill was awesome last week in San Diego and carried that onto this week with a victory over Yamaha's Aaron Plessinger and rounds one and two winner TLD's Shane McElrath. Those three look to be in the title hunt and there's not much to choose between them. Hill's got the raw speed but makes mistakes, Plessinger's starts aren't great and McElrath isn't flashy but he's fast and in shape. One rider that's completely blown it is GEICO Honda's Jeremy Martin who has been quick but bad starts, crashes have him way down in his last 250SX season.





A third of the way into the 250SX West and doubt still remain on Jeremy Martin's combo with the Geico Honda for Supercross; when will the surprise performance come?



SUPERCROSS: ANAHEIM 2



Nice practice shot of Justin Bogle as the former 250SX champ continues to feel his way around the RM-Z450







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The Answer Elite line was designed to seamlessly blend form, fit and function into products that meet the demanding needs of motocross racers. High performance materials and features are combined with a refined fit to make a kit that is a necessity in any gear bag.



### LEATT

These days it is easy to forget Leatt's roots as the pioneers and standard-setter when it comes to neck protection. The three podium finishes for Red Bull KTM's Marvin Musquin has placed renewed attention on the GPX 6.5 Carbon and the premium model in the Leatt canon. The brace is the peak evolution of decades of work, research, discovery and investment by the South Africans and the carbon materials ensure this structure is the lightest (just 600g), sleekest and most rigid offering in their range. The product is fully adjustable and is orientated around ALPT (Alternative Load Path Technology) to reduce forces on the neck. The list of specs is impressive so here they are: 1) CoreFlex split rear thoracic strut is more comfortable and designed to work with the body's natural movements. 2) Thoracic rear strut is engineered to snap off before applying excessive pressure to the back. 3) MaxiWeave Carbon matrix for increased rigidity and lower weight. 3) 5.5/6.5 helmet rim striking platform design for a biomedical balanced head and helmet freedom of motion. 4) Three-way adjustability and sliding front and rear SureFit adjusters to ensure optimum fit. 5) Three-angle rear thoracic strut adjustments to fit most body shapes. 6) Sculptured, split front for improved comfort and fit. 7) Low profile push-button open/closure system. 8) Easy-to-use emergency release mechanism for injured riders. 9) Engineered collarbone cut-out to help keep your helmet and brace away from your most fragile bones. 9) Injected, durable and easy-to-clean foam padding. 10) Air flow ribbed body padding for optimum ventilation. 11) Folding rear thoracic strut for easier packing. 12) Free, optional clear chest strap included.

The 6.5 Carbon comes at around 500 dollars. The 5.5 (370 dollars, almost 200g heavier and available in different colour schemes) and 4.5 (300 bucks) versions of the GPX are kinder on the wallet but swap those carbon elements for fibreglass Polyamide. The 5.5 Junior is also 300 and almost an essential purchase for any youngster thrashing a bike in anger.

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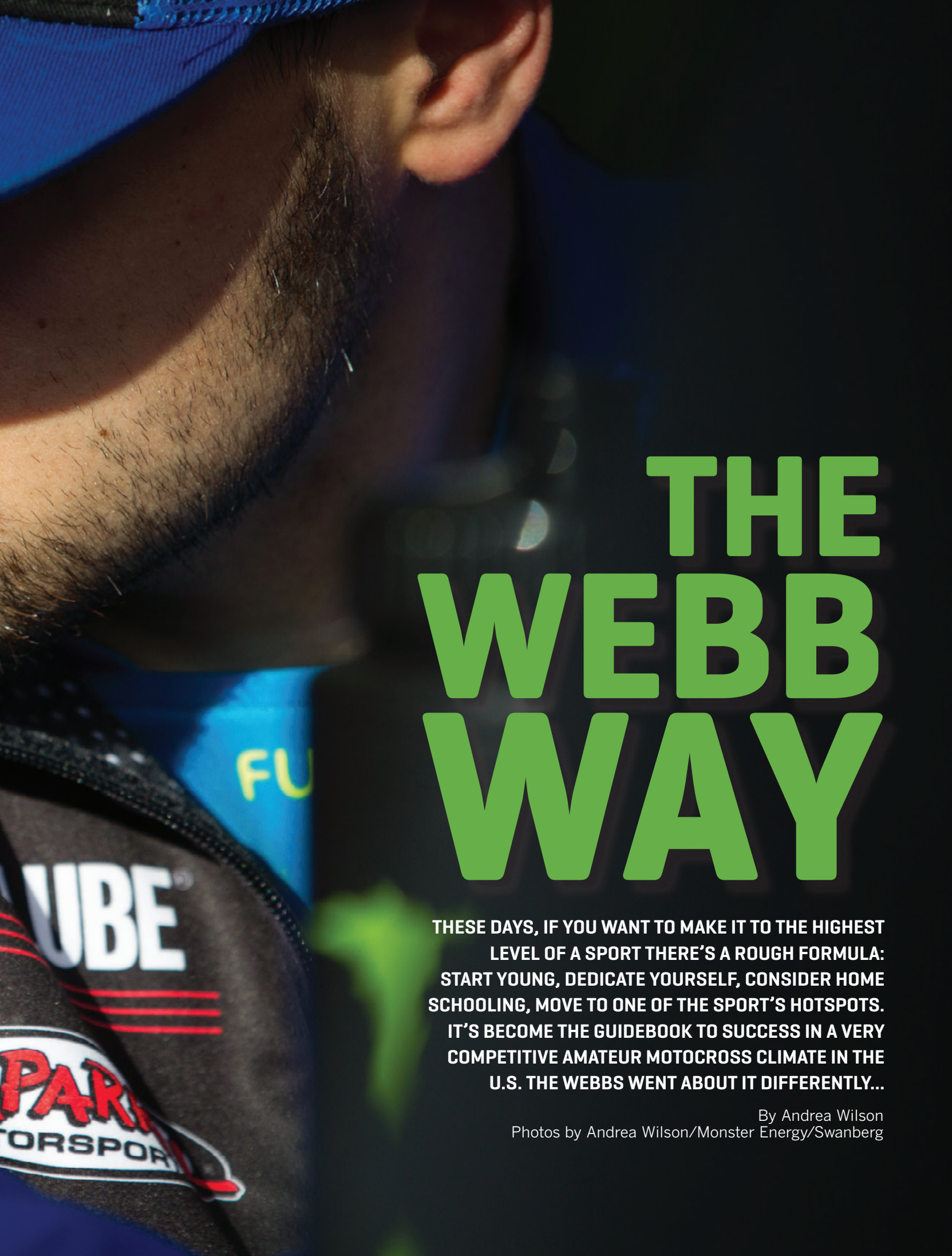
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# THE WEBB WAY

THESE DAYS, IF YOU WANT TO MAKE IT TO THE HIGHEST  
LEVEL OF A SPORT THERE'S A ROUGH FORMULA:  
START YOUNG, DEDICATE YOURSELF, CONSIDER HOME  
SCHOOLING, MOVE TO ONE OF THE SPORT'S HOTSPOTS.  
IT'S BECOME THE GUIDEBOOK TO SUCCESS IN A VERY  
COMPETITIVE AMATEUR MOTOCROSS CLIMATE IN THE  
U.S. THE WEBBS WENT ABOUT IT DIFFERENTLY...

By Andrea Wilson  
Photos by Andrea Wilson/Monster Energy/Swanberg



**T**he Webb family stayed true to their roots in a small seaside town in Eastern North Carolina and maintained a bit of normalcy. With back-to-back AMA Supercross 250 West titles and an AMA Motocross 250 title to his resume before the move to the 450s with factory Yamaha this year, it's hard to argue that the Webb way hasn't worked so far.

Being an athlete is in the Webb genes. His dad was a professional surfer and his mom a P.E. (physical education) teacher. Although Bob Webb is quite humble about his background in the surf world, the guy is a pretty big deal. He's a legendary board shaper on the east coast and is highly thought-of in surfing circles, especially in Morehead City where he still has his surf shop.

Perhaps the natural progression for any offspring would be to grow up as a professional surfer, but by the time Cooper showed up his dad's Pro days were done.

"He was still shaping and still continues to shape, but he was a pro surfer and one of the real first east coast shapers that was actually good," Cooper said about his dad. "It was funny. He still surfed every once in a while when I was a kid and just going out on the water, it was like a celebrity showed up at the beach. I was always scared to go out in crowds and he was like, 'don't worry about it. I know every person here.' So we'd go there and they'd say, it's Bob and his kid. They're all like getting out of the way and helping me. It was actually pretty cool."

There was no pressure for Webb to follow in the footsteps of his father. When he was growing up, it was more about having fun whether it was surfing, moto, or stick and ball sports. He was allowed to pave his own path, and not have the shadow or big name with all those expectations that go with it hanging over your head.

"It was a little different because I didn't really know the surfing world," Cooper explained. "I just surfed for fun. But hearing stories and stuff and people just coming to the shop and being like, 'Your dad is a legend!' and all this: it's a pretty cool thing. It's totally different. So for him to basically be a badass at something completely different is cool."

Although Bob Webb had his niche in surfing, it wasn't like Cooper's Moto bug came out of the left field. The elder Webb grew up riding moto as well and got back into it again when Cooper was little. So like most kids that ride, it was a family thing and Cooper took to it straight away.

His dad would give him rides around the motocross track but that wouldn't satisfy the four-year-old for long. Bob struck a deal with his young son: "you learn how to ride your bike without training wheels and I'll buy you a motorcycle." His dad thought he bought himself at least a year with that promise. It was more like a day. His dad was still reluctant to hold up his end of the bargain because he was worried Cooper was still too small, but a deal was a deal. Cooper got his PW50, his mom got a TTR125 (a birthday present) and the whole family went riding; then racing.

Funnily enough, that wasn't one of Cooper's earliest memories of being on a motorcycle.

"My earliest memory was actually hitting a palm tree on a 50 when I was four," he said smiling. "I told my buddy that I knew how to ride a dirt bike. He was a neighbour of ours. He had a 50. I'd never touched one and I told him I could ride it no problem. I put on a skateboard helmet and actually hit a palm tree."

That was before he got his first bike. Cooper found the humour in it but that wasn't the only memory, he has many of them that can all be summed up in one word: fun.



THE WEBB WAY





"I've always really enjoyed traveling and seeing different parts of the country and even the world," he said. "At that age for me, it was serious, but I didn't really care whether I got first or fifth. It didn't matter to me until later. I was good in the amateurs but I'm sure I could have been better. But it all works out because now is when it matters. You don't want to do so much riding that you're tired of it by the time you are 20 or 21 years old and you're just sick of dirt bikes... I hear a bunch of people, especially the older guys in the sport kind of talk about that: 'I wish I would have kind of enjoyed being a kid.' I feel like I really took advantage of that. I always took it serious but it was just always a hobby until really I signed my first professional contract."

The fun factor was important for his parents but so was school. So when a lot of his peers in amateur motocross were getting home schooled, Webb stayed in school through his Junior year until he went pro.

"Most kids in this sport that take it seriously get homeschooled when they're as young as second grade to as late as eighth grade, really," he said. "At the time when I saw all the other kids out of school I was like, 'I wish I was out. I don't want to go to school – this sucks.' But looking back now I really enjoyed it and meeting a bunch of friends that I would have never met. Just kind of having a normal life and knowing what that was like."

There's education in that bit of normalcy as well.

"I felt like I learned some social skills that maybe some other kids haven't," he added. "I feel like I'm a pretty easy-going person because of that situation. When you're in high

school, even middle school and stuff, if you don't talk to anyone or go out of your way to meet people, you're not going to have friends. I got to really actually enjoy certain things like going to prom or hanging out with my friends, going to basketball games, football games; actually being a part of it and knowing that quarterback's in my class or he's one of my really good friends or something like that."

***"My mom was the one that actually always took me to the track and the gym...My dad was always the one that worked on bikes and we went racing..."***

On the flipside, moto isn't mainstream in Carteret County. Football, Fishing, Surfing, that's more of the talk of the town. So he was able to blend in and not be treated differently than any other high school kid.

"A lot of people didn't know much about what I did at all until after I left and turned pro," he said. "Where I went to school I would say maybe two or three people even knew what dirt bikes were. So that was nice. I felt like nobody treated me differently because I was good at what I did. They liked me for me. And then once they found out now, they are really happy and kind of blown away. I'm glad I went that path."



In the end though, there's nothing normal about becoming a professional athlete at 16 years old. It becomes harder to relate to those kids you went to school with all those years.

"Yeah, it's tough. I think the toughest part is when you actually turn pro," he explained. "For me I turned pro, I signed my contract, I actually did a final exam on a Friday and flew Saturday morning to California to get ready for the pro nationals. So it was one of those things for me where it was a little bit of a culture shock at first. I moved to California at 16 basically; by myself. Me and my mechanic went, but it was a whole new world living on your own. It was a hard thing to do. Being across the country, so far from my family and being used to seeing them every day, them doing the little stuff for me, the cooking and all that stuff. It made me grow up fast. But I think it made me who I am today. It taught me a lot."

That big move from a small seaside town in Carteret to Southern California was trying but another learning experience and the end result was even more motivation to succeed.

"I think that's where maybe some people are different than me because when they do turn pro their parents are able to go with them everywhere, whereas my parents had to work," he said. "Yeah, I just signed a pro contract, it's great money but it's not nearly enough to support your whole family. So they had to continue working. Like I said, a lot of people don't do that. Usually a parent or both of them goes with you, at least your first year. There were definitely moments where I wanted to just quit and move back and just live a normal life and get a normal job. I guess that's the loneliness and the stress. You have to perform and if you don't then you're done... but wanting to

succeed is what always brought me back to my conscience and made me just want it."

It also made him appreciate things more. Like the sacrifices his parents made. Family sacrifice, is not an original story. It's something that all families have to make to help someone rise to the professional ranks. But like all stories, they are personal and he has not forgotten his – where he came from and how he got there.

***"A lot of people definitely don't understand the sacrifice. There's no half-assing it. It's either you're in or you're out"***

"My mom was the one that actually always took me to the track and the gym and everything like that," he said. "My dad was always the one that worked on bikes and we went racing. One year we were contracted to do 54 races in a year and there's only 52 weeks. Not that we had to do it, but that was so we could make some contingency money and stuff like that."





## FEATURE

[ON ANAHEIM II] "THERE WAS A LOT OF PRESSURE AND THERE'S A LOT OF THINGS THAT GO ON IN THIS SPORT. SO I JUST KIND OF CLEARED MY HEAD. I REALLY WORKED HARD ON MY FLAWS. I CAME IN HERE WITH A WHOLE NEW MINDSET, JUST SUPER RELAXED AND ACTUALLY HAD FUN..."





THE WEBB WAY





That's the thing, racing's expensive. It costs dollars. It costs time. And time is money. Once Bob Webb saw that Cooper was committed and serious about going pro, he scaled back his business to focus on making sure that happened.

"I know my dad suffered a lot in his business from doing that," Cooper said. "But now it's all worth it. I know parents go out of their way for the kids no matter what, but it's tough. Now that I can see it and know what actually was going on during that process... When you're young you don't really understand what's going on, but to see my dad's business definitely suffer from me racing and then us moving, downgrading houses and stuff like that. You don't think about it when you're a kid. You're just like, oh, we're moving. But looking back now we definitely put everything into it. Beside the money, the time and everything to make sure that every time I raced everything was perfect. It's 100%. A lot of people definitely don't understand that sacrifice. There's no half-assing it. It's either you're in or you're out."

The Webbs were definitely in. But being away also made him appreciate home. So last Summer, instead of going to the traditional training hotspots – Florida or California – Webb chose the Carolinas. A track tucked behind a well-known road spot just off 95 on the North Carolina-South Carolina border, aptly named South of the Border.

"Once again I'm going off the beaten path, but I think that's what I've always done. A lot of people stick to the books and they have to hire this guy and that guy and go to Florida and be here and be there, and do this," he started. "I'm very serious in everything I do. I train hard; Gareth Swanepoel and I. I was his first ever guy. He was an ex-pro racer and we basically just learned together over the years what works and what doesn't. Him being a racer really helps. He understands a lot of things, not just on the training side but the personal life

and the riding stuff and everything like that. So it's good to work with him, and I've got great, great teammates and training partners. It all works out."

And it did work out. He capped off his 250 career with his first AMA Motocross 250 title, before he dove into the deep end of the premier class of the Monster Energy AMA Supercross Championship this season. It was a sink or swim moment. In his first two outings, the 21-year old was having trouble keeping afloat.

That's not to say Webb went into the year without realizing it was a year to learn, it's just that the learning process can be frustrating, especially when you're used to winning.

"Yeah, it sucked," he said simply. "Just seeing how much hard work we put in... me not being myself on race day was frustrating, but it's part of it. It's tough for anybody to know exactly how it's going to be or what's going to take place or anything like that. I knew coming in it was going to be very tough. There are a bunch of guys. I knew it was going to be really, really hard."

He may be a rookie, but he's been in the sport long enough to know what he needed to work on. The difficult part that it was all areas, not just one thing.

"I didn't have as good of an off-season as I would have really hoped, on-and-off the bike," he admitted. "At this level you can't come in under 100%. So I think that was the main thing, then mentally I just wasn't ready for it. There were so many problems that I need to fix and it's a bit overwhelming."

But thankfully for Webb he was able to make great strides last Saturday at Anaheim II, ending the night fourth. Everyone wanted to know his secret. What had finally clicked? He went back to what he knew best, what worked for himself.





"I think I just kind of started doing what I know... Just started being myself," he said. "There was a lot of pressure and there's a lot of things that go on in this sport. So I just kind of cleared my head and had a chill week. I did what I like to do and really worked hard on my flaws. I came in here with a whole new mindset, just super relaxed and actually had fun. So that was pretty nice to be able to see that translate to my riding and racing."

At the end of the day, there's no guidebook on how to be a champion. In Supercross, Motocross or any other sport. You can learn from what other people have done and try and follow it to the letter, or discover your own way. What works for Webb may not work for everyone else, but while it works for him, he might as well stick with it.





EVOL  
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# EVOLUTION 2.0



PASSION | HARD WORK | PERSEVERANCE











By Adam Wheeler  
Photos by JP Acevedo/Ray Archer

IN THE FIRST OF TWO PARTS OF A SPECIAL GLANCE AT OFF-ROAD HELMETS, THEIR EVOLUTION AND HOW THE PERSPECTIVE FOR SAFETY IS BEGINNING TO CHANGE (EVEN TO THE POINT WHERE THE FIM ARE BUSY WITH A DEDICATED COMMISSION) WE ABLE TO GET THE INSIDE TRACK ON THE MOST SUCCESSFUL LID IN AMA RACING: FOX'S V3. FROM IRVINE, CALIFORNIA TO BARCELONA, CATALUNYA WE WENT IN SEARCH OF THIS FAMOUS PRODUCT - USED BY THE LIKES OF ROCZEN, DUNGEY, REED, PAULIN NO LESS - AND TO FIND OUT JUST HOW MUCH OF A BIG DEAL IT IS FOR THE AMERICAN APPAREL AND RACEWEAR GIANTS...

# MAKING HEADWAY



We've explored some aspects of Fox in previous issues – their design philosophy and how it feeds into the fabrication of slightly different and advanced projects like their Instinct boots – but why focus on their V3 helmet? Maybe Fox is not the first name that springs to mind when it comes to head protection, after all they have the cool gear and desirable lifestyle range but is it the first port of call for arguably one of the most expensive and important purchases you'll make for riding? We were unsure. It's possible to ride head-to-toe in Fox but we were dubious as to whether we'd want to.

Some curiosity in the role of the V3 was sparked on a visit to their office/site/design hub in Irvine late last summer. The main entrance carries the distinctive form of the V3 mouthguard area; hardly a light cosmetic choice if the helmet does not carry some sort of pride-of-place or importance. There was also the history. No doubt athletes like McGrath, Carmichael, Stewart and many more were paid handsome dollars to be Fox athletes but they were also of sufficient stature and experience to shun any obligations to inferior offerings. Asking a bit more about whether the V3 should be considered a serious player in the saturated helmet market is met with information that it hits sales of around 50,000 per year in Europe alone, was one of the first to embrace MIPS technology, is the most successful helmet in American motocross and supercross and is the subject of a major redesign for 2017.

The details of the forthcoming V3 remain secret until the summer launch but a shrewd study of the lids worn by Ryan Dungey and Ken Roczen (when the German makes it back onto the Supercross floor) will reveal some clues towards a detail of innovation that shouldn't really work but surprisingly does. Acute observation of the profile of the V3 will also come under the microscope.

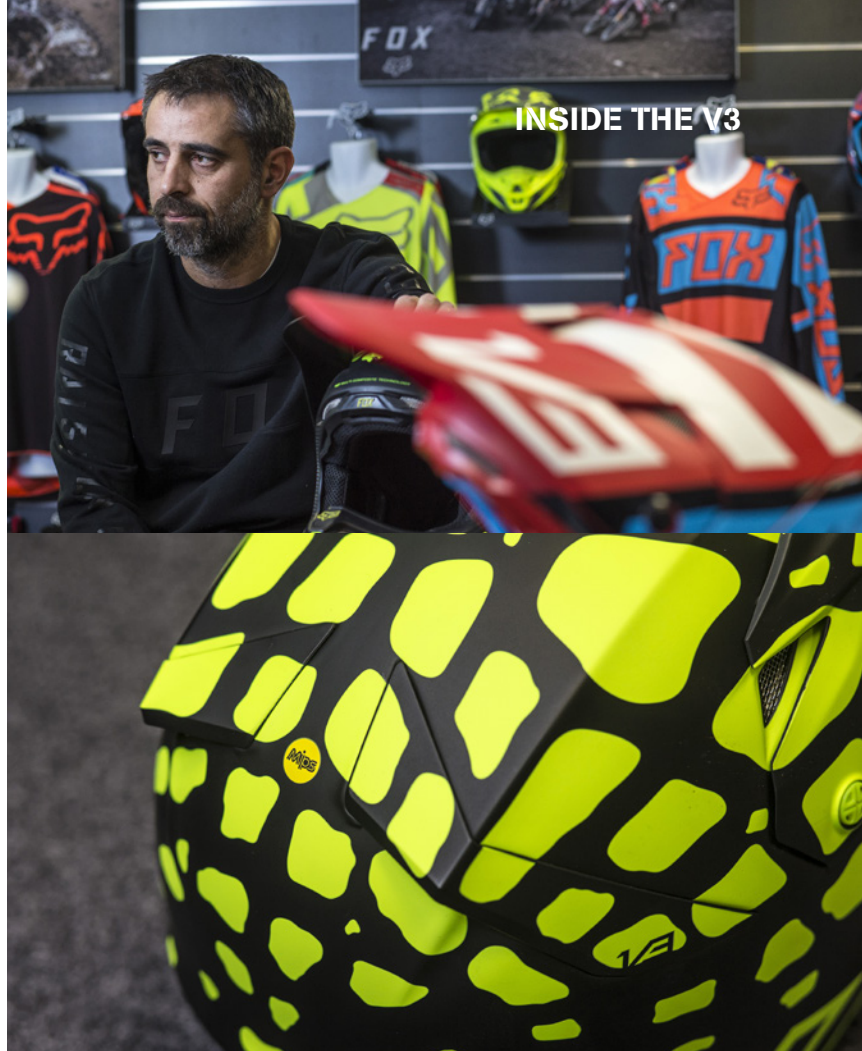


In a sense some of our doubts about Fox's intentions for helmets have been addressed but it doesn't hurt to listen to the conviction of the staff themselves, and long-term Fox people like Mark Finley - Global Category Director - Dave Durham - Creative Director - and Christophe Chavanel - EMEA Brand Manager - don't just spout sales speak at you. After all, the level of efficiency regarding this particular item can have mortal consequences. 'The helmet category in general is very important to us as it protects our largest investment (our pro riders globally),' offers Finley. 'The V3 is the first product in our catalogue; it sets the tone for the rest of the book. We want to customers to see the engineering that has gone into this product. The current V3 had our own in-house CAD designer working for over a year to perfect the design from the inside out. Safety, construction and performance were key factors for the design and development team.'



We put a lot of effort into helmets and that area of protection in general,' backs up Durham, who oversees all aspects of the lid. 'We have some amazing manufacturing capabilities and we are constantly trying to find ways to benefit the user and consumer: we all wear helmets ourselves you know? I wear the V3 every time I ride.'

In Barcelona and at Fox's European HQ Christophe Chavanel – who will soon transfer to Irvine – also talks about the primary role of the V3 and highlights the vicious crash by Paulin in the Qualification Heat for last year's Grand Prix of France (after which the Frenchman was fit and ready to compete less than two weeks later in Britain) as a job well done by the protection. 'It is two-three years now and I think it was the first helmet on the market to have the MIPS system,' he says before hinting that Fox could potentially reach the point where they have their own form of engineering to address rotational acceleration [more on this subject next issue] like 6D, Leatt and Bell have pioneered.



'The idea is to probably look for our own system and this could be one project for the Moto-X Lab. It is a lot of research and the truth is that the MIPS system is very well perceived. At Fox we are also working a lot in mountain bike and we know MIPS and the benefits well from that side and wondered why it could not work also in motocross. The intention of protection is to reduce the effects of a crash; you will never remove then completely just as there will always be crashes! MIPS made some very interesting studies with different crashes.'

'There are a lot of great helmet brands out there and I think we all have one intention in mind and that's to make everyone safer on the bike,' says Durham from his elevated office position in California where the V3 is designed and then sent to a long-term manufacturing partner in China ['A lot of the product development staff from the U.S. office are travelling frequently to Asia to make sure what we are designing and testing is a perfect match,' says Chavanel of the link].







Durham of course is at the forefront of the V3 and its relevance as one of the contenders in the vast choice when it comes to off-road helmet. From features on the new version it is clear to see that his team have been busy and fairly imaginative but the current helmet on the shelves also has an attention-grabbing set of specs and close examination – under the catching graphics and gloss – shows careful detail on items such as placement of vents and the use of composites. ‘Ten years ago you’d never have heard of a fabric inside that would wick away humidity or sweat and now our whole helmet has this material,’ says Chavanel. ‘It seems like every season there is a new material to work with. Of course we cannot change the construction of the helmet every season but we have managed to take the benefit of every fabric at our disposal and we mix them to get the best resistance possible and also make gains on things like weight. So we have these new composites and with the latest helmet we don’t have a carbon shell but we have carbon elements inside to reduce the weight. There is no compromise on safety but there is an improvement in the experience of wearing it for the rider.’

‘We have an Advanced Concepts group at Fox that was put into place about a year and a half ago,’ Durham says. ‘We have a lot of resources being put towards helmets and boots and protection. We really think it is an important part of what we can bring to the sport.’

Naturally this must be something of a budget swallower and in a company that also has hundreds of other products and apparel it is must be a case of the V3 fighting for elbow-room. ‘Absolutely!’ the designer gasps. ‘It is not cheap to do anything like that and also just jump in and be ready to walk away from an idea that you have spent a lot of money on. We believe in it, and that’s from the top down.’

Common sense would dictate that a helmet involves many strands of design and thinking to make the whole package work effectively. ‘I don’t think there was too much importance placed on aerodynamics in the past but now we are working in this area,’ Chavanel says by way of providing an example. ‘Last year we did two days of testing in a wind tunnel with Livia Lancelot [WMX World Champion] to look at airflow. In motocross you are not going as fast as a road bike so you don’t need so much ventilation but we are making sure the vents and exhausts are giving the right effect. This also explains why the EPS is like it is and nothing is blocking the input.’

It is an understatement to say that some of Fox’s ideas and schemes have given motocross an identity across the last five decades. You certainly cannot ignore them. As the biggest apparel producer today and one of the few companies to have hit the mainstream they still have to thump the drum hard for their V series to combat against some of the industry helmet heavyweights. ‘Yes, I do think this is a challenge for a brand like Fox,’ Finley says of the need to replay the message regarding the performance of the V3. ‘We want people to see the work that has gone into the technical and safety aspects of the V3 helmet; the fact that we are using MIPS, dual density EPS and a composite shell to manage energy dispersion in the event of a crash. These are all things we want our consumer to see and understand.’

‘It’s true we have a lot of products and we are [market] leaders when it comes to racewear so the evolution to something like FlexAir was natural,’ opines Chavanel. ‘But if you look at the entire motocross range for Fox then the helmet is a big part. The V3 is iconic and is a helmet that will appeal to frequent riders but we also have the V2 and V1 and the V1 is a big part of the business globally.’



The helmet market is much more competitive for us and with very specific brands. We are talking about Italian, Japanese and American brands and in racewear you don't really have that. Fox might be perceived more as a racewear company but our helmet business is very strong. We have a lot of plans coming up to ensure we keep pushing the boundaries as well so the consumers will know that we are still investing hard.'

The V3 is now Fox's premium lid and is at the top of the shelf after they stopped production of the V4. 'The main thing was focusing on one key story to develop,' Chavanel says by way of explanation. 'The main benefit of the V4 was the carbon shell but now we have a composite mix the need for new full carbon was reduced and we want to focus on the V3 that brought similar performance.'

Clearly when it comes to liveries, colours and schemes Durham and his crew draw on their inspiration and work with the racegear, meaning that the V3 and cousins are not slacking when it comes to looks on the track or trail. Perhaps this facet is not first or second on the priority list for Fox nevertheless aesthetics cannot be downplayed.

'I do think graphic and shape sways a lot of purchases,' muses Durham. 'We put a lot of effort into that – as we do our other products – but some of the designers I have here are so great. The helmet graphics team are some of the best in the industry I believe. Why? I think it is because of the way they (and we) work together. They are amazing in understanding where we have gone with a gear pattern and are able to take that and apply it to a hard-shell painted surface. And it is amazing to be so creative with that because it is not an easy thing to do.'







‘To be honest I miss the days of custom painted helmets,’ he adds when prompted for a personal Fox favourite. ‘There is a fine line between a commercial graphic and the feeling of a custom helmet and if you can walk that line, whether that is bold or intricate, then you have hit a sweet spot for people.’

‘It can be tricky to remain completely strict to our belief for safety because the trend right now – in Europe at least – is for very light helmets,’ Chavanel says on the classic compromise between style and safety. ‘We wanted to remain faithful to our original vision for the V3 look and stable. In terms of graphics we are strong when it comes to our racewear and the question becomes ‘how can we reproduce this onto our helmets?’ One of the best sellers actually is the matte black version that you can customise yourself.’

An exclusive peruse and grapple with the ‘17 V3 is the last piece of evidence that Fox are not easing their chinstraps when it comes to helmets. Even the six current V3s sat next to the future model in the Barcelona showroom would be an assuring option. Chavanel provides the final seal. ‘You do a job and you fight for something and then the rider gets the benefit. A [good] helmet is not cheap and it is an investment and it means a lot when you get feedback saving that the product saved a person’s life. We even get x-rays and scans that show how the helmet absorbed shock and did it’s job...it’s quite special to see.’



# 5

FEATURE



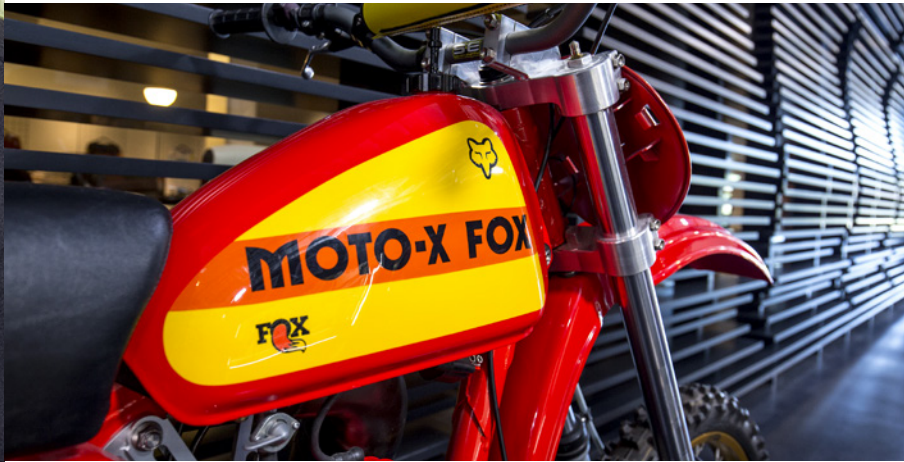




### 3 V3 MOMENTS

**Mark Finley has been with Fox for two decades and the entire V3 story. Here he provides his favourite recalls from the history of the helmet...**

1) 'The first the helmet we ever made was called the Pilot. I think it was around 1997. We had signed Jeff Emig to Shift racewear and Fox helmets. The development of the helmet ended up running late. We literally were paying Jeff for helmets but he had to wear another brand until we have the Pilot ready. I believe he started wearing it half way through the Outdoor Nationals. The V3 is the third generation of the original Pilot.'



2) 'Ricky Carmichael's titles in the original Pilot, Pro Pilot and the V3 were huge for us. People did not look at us a helmet brand. The fact that we worked with RC on the development of the V3 and then saw him take it to so many titles really put us on the map in the helmet category.'

3) 'RC looping out at the Pontiac SX in 2002. He broke his visor but it was hanging on by one side screw. He raced the entire main event with the visor hanging off the side of his helmet. He nearly came back to win. I think his teammate Nathan Ramsey won with RC right on him at the finish. I also have to say that replica helmets were cool back in the day. We did some great one for Ricky and Carey Hart. The Hart helmet was one of our first matte black helmets with pinstripes. That thing sold so well.'





## ATLAS

Atlas' soft shell protection is an attractive alternative to their Defender hard shell and a piece of kit that not only addressed neck brace compatibility but also had a few interesting selling points like a high performing assembly system and water-proof material. The Guardian Lite could be spotted around race paddocks, particularly in warmer climes where the slim and light build is as much of an asset as the protective structure. Of the back panel Atlas state: 'The flexible back panel exceeds CE EN1621-2 Level 2 (highest level), but can still conform to your shape and move when you move.' The Guardian Lite has wrap-around EVA foam and four adjustment points, can be worn under or over a jersey and of course comes easy to fit with the brands range of neckwear like the Carbon and Air braces. The Guardian is a more encompassing product with shoulder and elbow sections.

For more information look at: [www.atlasbrace.com](http://www.atlasbrace.com)









# Guardian



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**D** **FEATURE**

# **NOTHIN BUT**

**GOING DEEP WITH**

By Eric  
Photos by





# G TO DO WIN

**ADAM CIANCIARULO**

Johnson  
Ray Archer



**D**arkness falling on the edge of downtown in America's finest city. 1.3 million people live in San Diego, California and at around 4:40 P.M. on Saturday night, a wild-eyed and enthusiastic cross section has wandered down to Petco Park. Welcome race fans to round two of the Monster Energy Supercross Series. Adam Cianciarulo, aged 20, was sitting in a folding chair leaning against the trailer section of the Monster Energy/Pro Circuit/Kawasaki 18-wheeler and looking at the crowd surrounding the outfit's mothership.

"There's nothing like that. That's the best 45 seconds you're ever going to feel in your life," remarked Cianciarulo about just what it feels like to win a supercross main event. And AC knows. Back in 2014, America's then latest moto sensation won the very first 250SX main he lined up for at Dallas. He'd then win two of the next four rounds before hitting the dirt hard at Toronto and saw his season come to an abrupt end. He hasn't been back behind the starting gate inside a football or baseball stadium since and that's why the 2017 250SX East Region series will be of the utmost importance for this pragmatic and likeable racer. In the great natural selection contest that is supercross, a rider, for all intents and purposes, only gets to play a few cards before it's win or bust. Cianciarulo, as you're about to read about, knows he might very well may be down to his last card. Keeping an auspicious low profile during the off-season, while in San Diego, AC spoke about the recent past and immediate future of his racing career. Read on.

### **What's going on in the world of Adam Cianciarulo?**

It's an exciting part of the year for me and I think for everybody. Being a fan of the sport, you kind of get excited at this time of the year and it's about time for me to start racing too. I'm doing the East Region this year, so you kind of get a little bit more of a sense of urgency in regards to testing and riding and making sure you have everything 'down' going into the first round of the year. Right now Saturday is kind of our off-day and kind of a fun day. I've come to the race to just kind of try study and watching the 250 and 450 guys and see how fast everybody is going and just enjoying it.

### **You've told me more than once in the past that you'd be at these races as a fan even if you weren't a racer. Still the same thing for you?**

Definitely. Growing up, and I've said this a million times, my parents weren't crazy into it

or anything like that. It was kind of born in my mind. It just grew on me. It was something that I've kind of created for myself. It's kind of independent. I feel like almost everything in life you learn from your parents, but this was my thing from the time I was little. I still enjoy going to the races. It's weird now being in the industry and people notice me and stuff like that. That's crazy to me because when I was a little kid walking around the pits at Daytona in about 2000, I would have never thought that would have been the case. I'm super-stoked to be in the position that I am. I still really, really love watching the races. I still get nervous watching. I think even more so than when I'm watching than even when I'm on the gate.

### **Going back to '17 preparation, if you had to put a percentage figure to it, at this given point in time how far back are you as far as being fully prepared to race?**

Oh, I'm 100%.



ADAM CIANCARULO









**Could you have ridden here in the West Region if you wanted to?**

If I knew I was going to be West, I probably could have done it, but I was a little bit behind in the testing department. I just started testing a couple of weeks ago. I think the East is cool, too, because the last time I raced supercross was in the East and I was the points' leader at the time. I'd like to go back there and try to win that championship, without a doubt.

**You were at the Anaheim opener last Saturday and I know you took notice of rookie Adam Forkner making his supercross debut. While looking on, what did you think?**

Of course he got kind of a bad start and a little get-off early, but I thought he rode really well. He kind of settled himself down which is hard to see in a rookie sometimes. They just want to pin it all the time. I thought he did an amazing job. It's cool to see that. Supercross is the pinnacle of the sport. The energy, Anaheim 1, any of that stuff; it doesn't really get any bigger than that – unless there is a championship on the line. It was really cool to see. I think he's going to be really successful this season and for years to come.

**Do you talk with Austin much? Do you know him?**

I haven't talked to Austin too much other than at the races. He's been in Oklahoma doing his thing. It's kind of hard. I don't really have too many friends other than the friends that I kind of train with every day and do that kind of thing with. It's kind of difficult.

**At this level, teammates or not, nobody is really friends with one another are they?**

No. Motocross is a team sport because there are teams and everything like that, but I don't think so. I'm pretty good friends with Joey Savatgy and I've talked to him about this before and it's like: "you and I both know that when we go to a race, I'm the only person that matters." It's a very selfish mentality you have to

have as a motocross racer. It's tough because you have to kind of manage that and you have to keep that at the race. In your home life you have to separate that. When we're here, I'm not really wishing anyone else the most success when I'm racing. Even though as a human I'd like to see other people do well, and I like to see other people succeed, when it's my turn, I'm the only one that matters.

**Racing as a profession is a tough business, isn't it?**

Absolutely. And with our careers... It's not like we're doing this until we're 40 or 50 years old. If you're going to win, it's right now. We're on Monster Energy/Pro Circuit/Kawasaki. Two years go by and somebody doesn't get good results, they could be gone. I could be gone next year or the year after that. I mean the time is now and there are a thousand people who want the opportunity that we have underneath this semi so it really brings that sense of urgency. You do it right now and you give it your best shot and you do everything you can because in 10 years when we're done racing, we want to be able to look back and say, "Hey, man. Maybe we didn't dominate everything, we tried our best and we weren't trying to be friends with everybody."

**Everything seems to be so much more amplified in motocross. It's a brutal sport that's so athletic and so easy to get hurt in. Man, you can get hurt during the week in this sport...**

Yeah, absolutely. Any rider could come out and win the first three supercross races in the 450 championship or the 250 championship and they can get hurt the next week and people would talk about that rider for maybe a week and then we would forget that he even existed until he came back and won another race. That's just kind of the nature of the sport, and really the nature of any sport. It's all kind of a here and a now thing. You're only as good as what you're doing at the moment.



**You've kept a low profile this off-season...**

Yeah, I think for me, I've had some injuries and I haven't raced as much as I'd like to and I always get interviewed and people are asking me about my potential and asking me about all this stuff and I just feel like I'm always talking and always talking about what I think I can do or something like that. I'm just kind of 'over that'. I just want to be the guy that can do it. That's what I've been focused on and that's it. I want to do the best I can every day and make the most improvement that I can. Like I said earlier, it's a here and now sport. It's kind of like do it or somebody else is going to have the opportunity. I'm at the best point that I've ever been and felt as a professional and I want to let that speak for itself. I don't want to brag about how great I feel or anything like that.

**A number of people I know involved in this sport say things about you along the lines of, "Adam Cianciarulo is a great guy and I want to see him go out there and win" and "That guy is a great ambassador of our sport. He deserves a shot at it." However, due to bad luck and injuries, it just hasn't worked out. Thoughts?**

I enjoy that aspect of kind of being a good role model and having kids come up to me or parents come up to me and say that they ask their kids to act like me or talk like me on the podium or something like that. I enjoy that. I think it's a part of the sport we're kind of lacking. I think we need to pay more attention to that and I think that's going to make the sport more popular. Also, you can only be a good ambassador without results for so long. You have to get results and you have to be good for you to have a voice and have credibility behind what you're saying. I mean my motivation is winning. That's always been my motivation and that's also been some motivation for me, too.

I want people to look at me and say, "That guy is winning and that guy had success but he can still be humble and still take time and talk to people."

**2017 will mark your fourth professional season and as we've spoken about, you've been through a lot with seemingly one injury after another. It's gone on long enough to where some insiders have remarked that this might be your last shot at a championship. I know this is a very forthright question, but do you feel that way?**

No, it's really not because my mentality is to do the best I can every day. Maybe at first it bothered me – maybe back in 2014 when I was 17 or 18 and maybe a little bit younger – but in a way I kind of feel I've already overcome it just through my attitude towards things. It's never going to be me, it's never going to make me miserable, and it's never going to do any of that stuff. I've conquered that aspect of it and now it's about me proving to myself that I can get back to the top of the sport and do what I know how to do. But in regards to proving to other people, that's kind of for them to decide, you know? That's something that can almost get lost, you know, trying to prove people wrong. Trying so hard to prove people wrong that you kind of forget why you're doing it. I just want to be able to do it for me and do the best I can.

**You made it all the way through the 2016 Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championship in one piece and got stronger and stronger as the summer went on. Was that all confidence inspiring for you?**

Oh yeah. Definitely. Coming into outdoors last year, I was coming off a couple of injuries and coming off of Epstein-Barr and a wrist injury. I also had some other things lingering at the





## ADAM CIANCIARULO

start of the season. It was bad. I probably started the outdoor series at maybe 60 to 70 percent of my strength. It's tough because your confidence can't waver because if you lose the belief in yourself, it's over. You have to believe in yourself. I started to believe more and more as the season went on. I was like, "Okay, this isn't THAT hard. I came off Hangtown and Glen Helen and it was like, "I don't know... That speed is crazy." Every weekend it seemed like it was getting a little more realistic and by the end I was like, "Okay, I get it now. I get what I need to do." It was a different season for me because I'm not used to sitting in the back and trying to be patient, but it was a really productive season.

### **Okay, full speed ahead for the 250SX East Region. What's the battle plan?**

The battle plan is always to win. You have to get a good start and you have to pin it, pretty much. I mean one mistake and somebody is going to pass you and you're going to have three other dudes pass you. I'm just looking forward to the atmosphere of supercross. It's addictive. It's something I haven't felt in so long that I almost kind of forget.

### **Yeah, you win and you're the star of the show...**

I love that. I love being able to work hard and I've kind of sacrificed my whole life for this. I like going out in supercross and getting a chance to prove it in front of the 50,000 people that are there. That's why you do it. That feeling. Those 45 seconds you have after you win a race and you're rolling from the finish line to the podium...there's nothing like that. That's the best 45 seconds you're ever going to feel in your life. I think about that all the time. I mean everything I do will be to get back to that point.





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# RETURN OF THE KING...?

By Adam Wheeler

**A**t some point after writing this Blog I'll be chatting (or hoping to) with Tony Cairoli for a swift update on how the distant landscape for a ninth world title lies for the thirty-one year old Sicilian. The KTM man will start his fifteenth season of Grand Prix in a matter of weeks and (amazingly) 2017 is the first time that he'll enter a campaign having failed to snare a world crown the two previous years since making his debut in 2003.

It feels like the annual pre-season call to Tony is a well-worn process by now. It wasn't an easy discourse this time last year when he'd busted several ribs and was clearly down-playing a training crash that would go on to have longer-lasting effects throughout 2016 and his attempt to recover the MXGP No.1 plate that he'd lost to Romain Febvre, chiefly due to a fractured arm midway through the 2015 championship trail. In 2015 and 2016 Cairoli infrequently arrived to the physical and mental peaks that underpinned so much of his consistency and dominance for a six year spell from 2009. From that unexpected crash at the '14 Nations in Latvia that led to a tweaked knee, #222 endured a sequence of hits and dips. Maybe it was just 'his turn', with title rivals like Gautier Paulin, Clement Desalle and Max Nagl all having their own misfortunes during Tony's glorious '09-'14 run where he dealt with illness, bumps and bruises but rarely any serious malaise that kept him away from the 350SX-F.

Now, and after hearing talk that Cairoli is in full-flow during tests, you can only wonder what he might be capable of in 2017 and from the interesting position of underdog. I think a part of Cairoli was savouring that chance to attack anew and without the weight of the gold number plate early in 2016 but the fall and torso injury (with nerve complications) put paid to his reverted role as the assassin rather than the target. A healthy Cairoli come Qatar poses a much more exciting and fearful prospect and I wonder how Tony might want to seize the forthcoming battle. His modus operandi in past years seemed to involve a combination of a high, fast - but also regular - level from the off. He built a run of podiums, moto and GP wins and trophies to set the pace in the points table and then reacted accordingly; experience and a vein of superiority the key ingredients to forging a path to the crown. Having watched Tim Gajser, Max Nagl and Gautier Paulin snatch glory and control in Qatar in the last three years will Cairoli want to announce his intention and honed feeling with the 450SX-F with an all-out blast at Losail? It would be a significant gesture that he means business. A desire to bury injury frustration and throw an new Answer glove firmly in the faces of his competition as well as the notion that he might not be able to match the intensity and verve of rivals ten (Gajser), six (Febvre), nine (Jeffrey Herlings) and five (Paulin) years younger than him.





A statement in Qatar would also carry extra weight by virtue of the fact that Tony has hardly excelled on the weird desert dirt. Since 2013 and the opening of MXGP at Losail (incidentally 2017 marks the final year of the contract of five between the QMMF and Youthstream; will a renewal be on the cards?) Tony has only won one moto there; the ill-fated Superfinal of that inaugural year that placed MXGP and MX2 classes together.

While Ken Roczen's shocking crash at Anaheim 2 and even Cairoli own seemingly innocuous spill at Maggiora in the summer of 2015 that led to the arm breakage proves that any forecasting or predication in such a notoriously unpredictable sport is largely guesswork; personally I have the feeling that 2017 could be a vintage term for Tony. The signs appear to be there: a (finally) settled development spell with the 450, the same team and staff, health and the bolt of motivation he needs to clamber to the top of MXGP again by proving to all observers that he is not yet descending the other side of the hill. Gasjer might bring the drive, Febvre the juice, Paulin the flair, Nagl the unexpected, Herlings the unknown, Desalle the style and then a mystery could wade in from the wings (Simpson? Tonus? Bobryshev? Van Horebeek? Strijbos?) but Cairoli is still the benchmark in my eyes. What kind of hand will he show us in less than five weeks?











## ALPINESTARS

Something a little different from Alpinestars with the Novus helmet. The Italians describe it best thus: 'Following decades of performance R&D and protection innovation, Alpinestars advanced head protection research team has developed the Novus Helmet. Featuring a host of industry innovations, the Novus is an open-face helmet that incorporates a visor, tinted sun visor, a ventilation system and the 'A-Head' micro-adjustment system for precision fit, making the Novus perfect for city riding and urban commuting.'

You're looking at a light injection moulded thermoplastic resin outer shell (ECE homologated) and a multi density closed cell polymer foam. An anti scratch visor also houses a removable sun visor and moisture wicking fabric and the lid has a Bluetooth Comms system. The 'A-Head' is a curious patented concept somehow involving an adjustable fit around the circumference of the head as well as the top.

While we're skeptical on open face helmets in terms of protection there is little doubting their popularity for inner city commuting and Alpinestars have done their usual trick of combining a product with safety provision, comfort, practicality and styling. No price info on the Novus just yet but it is one of the standout items in the 2017 Spring collection.

[www.alpinestars.com](http://www.alpinestars.com)





# OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW? NOT JUST YET, IT SEEMS...

By Neil Morrison

**T**here was much to look forward to in Madrid on Thursday past. Along with the annual unveiling of Movistar Yamaha's colours for 2017, there came the chance to grill factory bosses, gauge Maverick Viñales, wide eyed and clad in a darker shade of blue, and, just shy of his 38th birthday, contemplate Valentino Rossi's reaction to it all.

Aside from the usual banal brand promotion involved with these glitzy 'dos', it's a chance for riders to put up a front, show the fruits of their winter's labour, and state their case for coming season ahead. Here, their approaches diverged, and for differing reasons suggested that managing director Lin Jarvis was genuine when saying the line-up "couldn't be better."

"We have the living legend and then the best, hungriest young talent," said Jarvis of Rossi and Viñales. This is the time of year for profound optimism ringing out, and it was the younger of the two riders that echoed his new boss' sentiments and talked up a championship challenge. Rossi reserved judgement, and refused to get overly excited by testing improvements, hinting at a more considered approach to his 22nd season in GPs.

There was little sign of the icy tension that engulfed Movistar's showpiece a year ago, when, at times, the grinding of Jorge Lorenzo's teeth was almost audible over Rossi's words. For now the Italian and Viñales smiled for the cameras and traded niceties. For Viñales, "every year the limit is the higher and Valentino is always there." Rossi's

responded, "I have to understand the way to be as fast as him." Touching, no doubt, but truer tests of this relationship will come.

Both acknowledged the need to work on the YZF-M1's capabilities in the second half of races, while also comfortably swatting away questions on their working relationship. Marc Marquez and a reportedly much-improved Honda is the target in their sights, they concurred. Working together is the only means of overcoming his might.

While much of this is far from revelatory, there were a several things of note that suggest Yamaha is in fine shape going into the season ahead. As the presentation itself offered only the slightest glimpses into philosophy behind the 2017 YZF-M1 – a "very positive step to get back Yamaha's traditional 'character' of sweet handling, according to MotoGP group leader Kouichi Tsuji – the juicy stuff was reserved for the media debriefs soon after.

It could be argued it was Rossi's aim to appear completely at ease, to present a figure that was not only free of the strains of age and defeat, but one that was pleased to duck a few big questions and let his younger counterpart take on much of the attention. His words said as much, as Rossi refused to be drawn on predictions. "On paper it's not more easy or more hard [than before]," he said, giving little away. "It depends on me and the team. We will try to arrive ready in Qatar and stay concentrated for all the season."





“My preparation for the championship this year is quite similar to the last seasons, but I try to make small details better.” Those small details included eradicating those costly mistakes from a year ago.

“From the first test [I will] work on my riding style, my position on the bike and try to make another step.” The most he would give away on the '17 M1 was a cloaked, “the potential is high,” a dumbed-down version of the optimism expressed earlier by Tsuji-san.

A year ago, his simmering bitterness at how 2015's closing chapter was penned was all-too-apparent, a factor that crew chief Silvano Galbusera noted in a recent interview with La Gazzetta Dello Sport. “He was preoccupied” and “not as relaxed as normal,” he said of his rider. Could the Italian be aiming to steer clear of headlines and controversy, instead minding his own business and planning an early attack? After all this did serve him well in the opening half of '15.

And what of Viñales, now able to speak of his experiences with Yamaha publicly for the first time? Any thoughts that his new surroundings may lead to a lapse in his evergreen courteousness were soon dispelled. Mid-way through his debrief in English he was called away due to the wearying demands of TV. Not a problem. He was soon back to field more questions. And he spoke at length too, answering with consideration and confidence. “From the first race we can start to think to fight for the title,” he declared.

He found the M1 immediately to his liking. The electronics were a big step up to what he had used before, and the bike was excellent on corner exit. “In Sepang I was already feeling, ‘Wow, this is my bike.’”

The most interesting observation had already come a little earlier when addressing the Spanish media. Viñales is quickly evolving an eye for the small details, and gave the impression he is already aware of where his main rivals stand. “When you get home and see the times, you see what every rider was focussing on,” he said of the days that followed the Valencia test. “I saw Marc did a lot of laps. He was really fast and consistent. I'll admit, it surprised me and I don't want to get caught out [again].”

Rossi and old team-mate Lorenzo cited Yamaha's inability to improve throughout '16 as a reason for their respective challenges unravelling. Now, with a common challenger in mind, both of Yamaha's men appear to be poised once again for a run at motorcycle racing's highest honour.



# THE NEW EMPIRE?





YAMAHA STOLE A MARCH WITH THEIR TITLE SPONSOR-THEMED 2017 TEAM PRESENTATION LAST WEEK IN MADRID. WHILE THE PROSPECT OF VALENTINO ROSSI BEING IN TOWN AND APPEARING IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT SHADE OF BLUE IS ALWAYS GOING TO PROMPT SOME INTEREST AMONG SPECIALIST PRESS AND SPANISH MAINSTREAM MEDIA, IT IS FAIR TO SAY THAT THE FIRST AIRING FOR MAVERICK VIÑALES IN HIS SQUAD'S COLOURS WAS ALSO REASON FOR BUZZ. **NEIL MORRISON** WAS IN THE CAPITAL CITY (AND BEFORE FLYING THE SAME DAY TO BOLOGNA FOR JORGE LORENZO'S DUCATI UNVEILING) AND APART FROM HIS THOUGHTS ON THE EVENT IN HIS LATEST OTOR BLOG WAS ALSO ABLE TO EMAIL THROUGH A TRANSCRIPT OF WHAT THE RIDERS SAID ONCE THE TV CAMERAS HAD BEEN SWITCH OFF. HERE ARE SOME OF THE WORDS FROM #46 AND #25 THEN WHEN MOTOGP STARTED TO AWAKE FROM WINTER SLUMBER...





# MAVERICK VIÑALES

**Q: Rossi has a lot of experience with Yamaha....can you see yourself working together to beat Marc Marquez?**

**MV:** I think, like we showed in Valencia, I have the speed to ride really fast. And Valentino has great experience. So with both combinations we can make a really good bike. I think Valentino is at a great level; he is always working and thinking for the race, not for the fast lap. If we start to fight each other, you cannot be focused as if you are concentrating on yourself and doing the best you can do. Honestly, it will be difficult - to beat Marquez you have to be at 200%. So we have to build a really good bike.

**Q: You are still very young. How do you deal with this situation and pressure. What are your goals, do you want to fight for the title?**

**MV:** Sure, I wanted it already when I was a kid!

**Q: Could this be a learning year?**

**MV:** Honestly, this will be my third year in MotoGP and I think I've had enough experience to know how the races will go. I know I will need experience with the Yamaha, but I think already from the first race we can start to think to fight for the title.

It is important to start with this mentality, because maybe in the middle of the season then you start to think [you can fight for the title] and it's too late. So you have to start [the season] thinking like that and always have this objective in mind. It's important not to lose the objective, because with the objective comes the motivation. About the pressure, I've always worked very good under pressure and I remember I did my best races last year during the deal between Suzuki and Yamaha; there was a lot of pressure! With the pressure I work even better because I know there is an objective and I feel even more motivated.

**Q: Do you feel a difference in pressure and expectations within this team especially?**

**MV:** Inside the team no because every team tries to keep calm and show the riders it is

okay to go fast on the bike. So inside the team they want to win and are winners but the atmosphere that we breathe is really normal, really good. Calm. In the team I feel really good. It's more about yourself; what you push for, what you are looking for and normally the pressure comes from there. When you think 'this year I can win, so I have to go for it'. But normally when I think like that I push myself even more.

**Q: It seems the team have been impressed by your precise feedback...**

**MV:** I think I learnt a lot in Suzuki because it's not easy to develop a bike from nearly zero. I think that experience will give me a lot of advantages on that side. I understand really well what the bike is doing. So that was a really good learning curve. Honestly I left Suzuki with a really good level in many areas and for that I'm really happy and grateful for them. When I jumped to the Yamaha... it's a bit easier to go fast and the lap times are there. When you had a bike that every time you go 100%, even on Friday morning, then you get used to it. If I can bring the Yamaha at 110% all the time, it's going to be a really good level.

**Q: Did you look at Rossi and Lorenzo's data...?**

**MV:** It's the first thing I did!

**Q: Can you compare riding styles...**

**MV:** When I compare the data you can see the experience. How they use the rear brake, how they close the gas to not make the bike wheelie and then comes more power. All these things I can learn and that's why I say, still with my riding style I can improve because they are really experienced riders. Sure I will use, everyday, the data from Jorge or even from other riders. Normally you always find something that is better and if you can learn and improve it's always good. For example, in Valencia, on this long corner, I was entering the first part with a lot of gas and then I was slowing down.





Then looking at the data I was saying 'maybe if we do it in a different way, we can improve'. And finally, the last sector was the best one. So it's very important to be intelligent and look at the other riders. For sure some corners you cannot always be competitive and some corners someone's better than you and if you can learn it, it's better than not looking at the data and then you don't know.

**Q: In races you never really crash...**

**MV:** I always have the mentality that regularity can win the title. You know, it's very important to be on the podium, for sure, or winning races. But it's better one day to make 16 points than zero. It's important to always have that in mind. At Suzuki sometimes I thought maybe I can make the podium, but maybe I crash like at Aragon. So I decided to make fourth because it was stupid to take more risks than I was taking at that moment. Normally on the bike I think a lot and I hope this year also I think and don't get too 'hot'! It's a good qual-

ity if you can think on the bike because sometimes you get 'hot', don't understand the limit and you crash.

**Q: Now you are in a title winning team whereas Suzuki was a small and newer team; how is atmosphere different...?**

**MV:** It's not really different. I mean, the working style is quite similar, we talk a lot between all technical people but you feel in the atmosphere - that the changes they do on the bike - they know for sure what they are doing. That for me was impressive. That I'd say, 'okay, now I would like to brake a little bit later here, even if later on I cannot close the corner any better' and they just modify the bike and it does it! For me that was quite impressive. Also with the electronics they were saying that the traction control is cutting so much here and there. I say 'no, I don't even feel the traction control' because it is so good. For me it was impressive, how prepared they are.







## VALENTINO ROSSI

**Q: The grid has changed a bit...do you feel this is a good chance for title number ten?**

**VR:** I don't know, I hope. I think on paper it's not easier or harder. It depends on me and the team. We will try to arrive ready in Qatar and stay concentrated for all the season. This is very important because last year I had a good speed. I was competitive in a lot of different tracks and different conditions, but I made some mistakes and had some bad luck, so we have to try to make better. It will be very interesting this season because three top riders changed bikes and especially with Lorenzo, this is an historic move. So it will be very interesting to understand his level of performance. And also Viñales with the Yamaha and Iannone with the Suzuki. So I think it will be very interesting, but for sure not easy.

**Q: What points have you identified with the bike to improve for this year?**

**VR:** For me, our bike is very good, very strong and with new tyres we are fast from the first lap. This is good. Where we have to work is the second half of the race, because it looks like in the second half of the season we suffered - especially compared to the Honda that made a step - and we have to work there. Try to save the tyres, and try to be more constant to the end. I think we have to work on the electronics a lot and try to understand if the new chassis is better from this point of view.

**Q: What about you personally?**

**VR:** You know, it's very important to not stop working and never stop improving. My preparation for the championship this year is quite similar to the last seasons but [I've] tried to make small details better, try to understand, and from the first test in Malaysia work also on my riding style, my position on the bike and try to make another step.

**Q: At the Valencia test you didn't seem so satisfied but were more positive in Sepang. Tell us what you were testing and how it improved...**

**VR:** We didn't know anything about the 2017 bike before Valencia but from rumours inside in Japan we expected a bigger change. So I think that everybody in the team, me for sure, were curious to see the bike. But at the end, it is the normal development by Yamaha. From the outside, the bike looks exactly the same, or just some small details. Valencia is always a difficult track for me personally and it is also a track where it is difficult to understand the potential of the bike. But in Malaysia we worked more. It is true that there is no big change, but the potential is high.

**Q: Do you have a better relationship with Vinales than Lorenzo?**

**VR:** You know, everybody on the track is always very hard [rivals] and especially with your team-mate. But afterwards can have the relationship off the track and I think we can have a good relationship, yes. You know, from 2013 when I went back to Yamaha my relationship with Lorenzo was not so bad for all the years - then we had some problems at the end of 2015! So I think we [Rossi and Viñales] can have a good relationship and especially that we can work together to improve the bike.

**Q: Could we see nine winners in 2017?**

**VR:** Why not. It's not impossible, I think. Nine different riders winning will be hard because it is something very strange at this level...but that is good for MotoGP. I think a minimum of six riders can win a race this year.



# LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION...

By Graeme Brown

**W**ith American politics dominating the world news at the moment I came over 'all Rumsfeld' when thinking about the coming WorldSBK season. There are known knowns: these are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns; that is to say, there are things that we know we don't know. But there are also...well, you get the picture.

Let's get the obvious one out of the way first. Jonathan Rea, Tom Sykes and Chaz Davies start the season as the three hot favourites for the 2017 WorldSBK crown. That we do know. What is unknown is what each man's form will be when the red lights go out at round one in Phillip Island in just over a month's time.

Chaz Davies and his Ducati were on fire in the last half of the season but Rea was adamant that he had been looking at the bigger picture, one eye on the grand prize. The Kawasaki's were blisteringly fast in testing in November but testing is not racing and Davies may still have an edge over 20 or so laps.

I am sure the Welshman will still be smarting from that last race in Qatar when Rea sat up and gifted team-mate Sykes the runner-up spot in the Championship ensuring a Kawasaki 1-2. If these three end up as runaway leaders again this year I am sure there will be a little extra edge to the racing.

The known unknowns [right, that's enough]... but genuinely, everything else raises a question mark as to what the formbook will be. Honda have a brand new bike which is getting rave

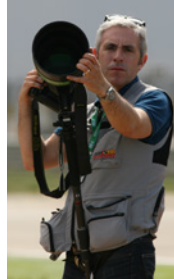
reviews from the motorcycling media but Nicky Hayden will start the season on the back foot having suffered a cruel knee injury in December whilst training, and WorldSBK rookie Bradl will be forgiven for taking a few races to get up to speed. How they will perform, especially early on, is genuinely up in the air.

A rivalry that I am looking forward to seeing rekindled is that between Eugene Laverty and Marco Melandri. Not much has been mentioned in the press about it but they famously had a fairing bashing session at Jerez in the last race of the 2013 season. Laverty won nine races in the factory Aprilia team that year and missed out on the title by 23 points but he then lost his seat to the diminutive Italian for the 2014 season, so there is no love lost. Being back on the Aprilia for this year will surely give him a high degree of confidence and he will want to prove that he is capable of winning again.

And what of Melandri? He has been going about his business at Ducati relatively quietly and not really drawing attention to himself. I know, however, that if he has his mojo back he will be a fierce competitor and will give no quarter in a scrap. I am not sure if he does it deliberately but we know from past experiences that he is not averse to making enemies on the race track.

The last unknown is how Michael VDH will perform on the Yamaha. His initial feeling from the tests at the end of the year were positive but 'more work is needed'. Now I do know PR speak when I hear it, so his potential as an outright championship contender does remain unknown.





The young Dutchman has the raw talent, and now with suitable experience should be able to put himself in the running. Last season the R1 impressed in brief spells but overall neither Sylvain Guintoli nor Alex Lowes were able to get the machine to perform over a full race distance every weekend.

With Melandri and Laverty returning to the paddock I do know that there will be a little more spark and this might rub off on everyone else. These characters coming together again also reminds me of pre-event PR photoshoots in years gone by when the Brit pack (if Eugene will forgive me for including him in that) would spark off each other and an undertone of needle was never too far from the surface.

The final thing we can't predict is how the changes to the technical regulations and the grid format for race two this year will play out. The shake up to the grid is completely unprecedented and has been designed solely to spice up the competition. Whilst MotoGP has its bitter personal rivalries, WorldSBK riders are often criticised for being too nice to each other. I am not a fan of the grid changes but I can see some elbow and fairing scrapes in the first couple of laps in race two causing some fractions as the season progresses. If we get some really close racing along with a few 'racing incidents', and the odd inter rider Twitter storm thrown in, we could be in for an all time classic WorldSBK season.







# WELL, WELL...

By Roland Brown  
Photos by Alessio Barbanti, Paul Barshon,  
Matteo Cavadini & Freddy Kirn







**W**ith its single saddle and old-style “hard-tail” look rear end, Triumph’s Bonneville Bobber is one of the most imaginative and distinctive bikes of recent years. It’s a radical combination of modern engineering and vintage style that pushes retro-bike design further than just about any other model.

The bobber influence has been seen before, most commonly from Harley-Davidson, but the Triumph is subtly different. It’s inspired by the tuned and stripped-down “bob-jobs” (the name coming from trimmed rear fenders) that American riders built for speed and lightness in the Forties and Fifties. Among them were Triumphs, based on models including the 500cc Speed Twin.

Triumph’s starting point was last year’s Bonneville T120, which donates its 1200cc, liquid-cooled parallel twin engine. The sohc, eight-valve unit is mechanically unchanged but a new twin-airbox intake system and double-skinned exhaust boost torque by up to ten per cent between 3500 and 5500rpm, while cutting the top-end output by a few horsepower, to 76bhp at 6100rpm.

Where this Bobber differs notably from the old machines that inspired it is by having a new chassis, not simply a trimmed and lightened one. Its frame follows the T120’s in its tubular steel construction. But instead of holding twin shocks, the Bobber design uses a single, near-horizontal unit that is largely hidden below the single saddle, giving the impression of a hard-tail rear end.



That single saddle, which pivots on its aluminium base, also contributes to the Bobber’s unique look, backed up by some typically neat details. The instrument panel is a large, round analogue speedo with digital insert, and can be pivoted to optimise the view. Below the neatly shaped fuel tank is a period style battery box with stainless steel strap. The whole bike is very cleverly put together, with a custom feel that is rare in a production machine.

The T120 powerplant is even more flexible in its Bobber guise, especially around the mid-range sweet spot at 4500rpm. The bike pulls mightily almost from idle, rumbling forward obediently whenever its throttle is wound open. The six-speed gearbox shifts cleanly, encouraging short-shifting long before the limit of about 7000rpm. The Triumph remains smooth approaching its top speed of about 110mph, although the exposed riding position means that few riders will bother with such speeds for long.





TRIUMPH BOBBER









TRIUMPH BOBBER

**"WHETHER STANDARD OR ACCESSORISED, THE  
BOBBER IS SURE TO TURN PLENTY OF HEADS..."**





## TEST

Triumph's design team faced some new challenges in maintaining the marque's reputation for chassis performance, given that the Bobber weighs a substantial 228kg dry, and its look demanded a tyre combination of narrow, 19-inch front and wider, 16-inch rear. The required low seat (just 690mm in its lower position) also meant limiting suspension travel to a modest 90mm front and 77mm rear, well down on the T120 Bonneville's 120mm at each end.

That challenge was met successfully, because the Bobber handles impressively well and is also respectably comfortable. Steering geometry is conventional, despite the Triumph's custom style. Its steering is accurate, suspension has a taut and well-controlled feel, and the bike is enjoyably easy to crank into turns at an entertaining pace.

Enthusiastic cornering can get the footrests touching down when the Avon tyres have grip to spare. But ground clearance is adequate for a bike like this, and the Bobber's agile handling helps make it into a very passable all-round roadster, at least for riders who don't need to carry luggage or a pillion.

A compromise has been made with the front brake, which relies on a single 310mm disc and twin-piston caliper, instead of having twin discs like the T120. Stopping power is acceptable but urgent slowing requires a firm squeeze of the lever, and preferably assistance from the rear disc. At least there's an efficient ABS system to help.

For such a radical looking bike the Bobber is respectably practical. Its seat gives generous legroom, even in its furthest forward position. It can also be slid backwards, after loosening a few bolts, to give an even more laid-back look. Inevitably the small, 9.1-litre fuel tank limits range to under 100 miles, despite the engine's efficiency. But the Bobber wasn't designed for touring. It was created to be stylish, distinctive and fun, and scores highly on all counts.





Inevitably this Bonneville derivative costs slightly more than the base-model T120 (from £10,500 in the UK). Most buyers will add the price with accessories, of which there are more than 150, ranging from high “apehanger” bars and heated grips to aftermarket others. Triumph has also put together a couple of inspiration kits – the sporty Quarter Mile Bobber and more traditional Old School Bobber – to show what can be done.

Whether standard or accessorised, the Bobber is sure to turn plenty of heads – and put a lot of smiles on its riders’ faces. This imaginatively conceived, cleverly designed and neatly finished bike is good to look at, and more importantly still it’s an absolute blast to ride.







## BACKPAGE

A2 promo girls by  
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**'On-track Off-road'** is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at [www.ontrackoffroad.com](http://www.ontrackoffroad.com) every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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